

Rock'n'roll

The first Hindi film was made in 1931. The South entered the scene in 1948 — and films were never the same again.

Gemini's *Chandralekha* ('48) unleashed the spectacular song-n-dance studded drama in Bollywood. Four Southern composers — S. Rajeshwar Rao, D. Parthasarthy, R. Vaidyanthan and Balkrishna Kalla composed the music. The songs were sung by Uma Devi (screen name Tun Tun), Bharat Vyas (one of the lyricists too, the other being Pandit Indra), Zohrabai Ambalewali and others. The music was popular primarily because the film was a massive rage and from then to the latest Southern influences in 2000 has been an eventful and significant journey.

The South has influenced Hindi film music directly (via its talents) and indirectly (via its films and the trends it set), often leaving its imprint even on the careers of key players in the Mumbai music world. As the South became an alternative citadel for the production of Hindi films (the inputs from Lahore and Bengal gradually fizzled out around the same time as their spectacular entry) the trends it set had a big role to play in the shape of film music to come. After Gemini came AVM ('51's *Bahar*) and later L. V. Prasad's Prasad Productions, Sridhar's Chitralaya, S. Krishnamurthi's Venus Pictures, B. Nagi Reddi's Vijaya-Vauhini and others. Quite early on, they realized that Hindi films needed Hindi music. S. D. Burman and N. Dutta jointly scored *Bahar*, the second significant Southern film.

On occasion, however, Southern music directors did come in, like Adi Narayan Rao or R. Sudarsanam. The subjects chosen down there were naturally remakes of hit South Indian films, spruced up or modified for the composite national culture. In the '50s, when Hindi cinema in Mumbai was largely reflective of the changes in society, the South preferred mainly escapist fare like *Azaad* or family melodramas like *Sharda*. Stories were important, but music and dances were important too.

The South always had its own work ethic — speed

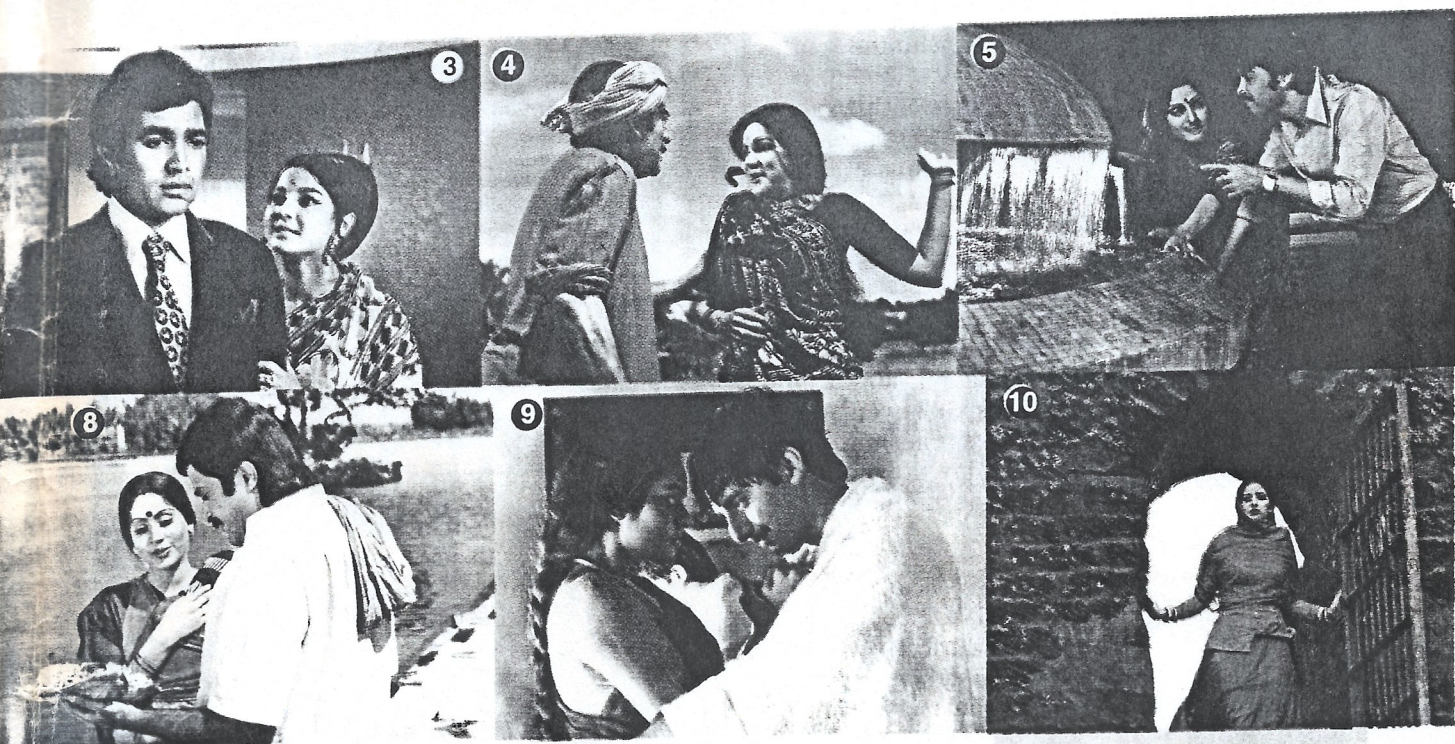


SOUTHER

and complete commitment combined in a hectic amalgam. It naturally preferred music directors and lyricists who could deliver — but fast. That is why in the South, music director Naushad had few takers, while prolific composers like Shanker-Jaikishan, C. Ramachandra, Chitragupta, Ravi and later Laxmikant-Pyarelal and Bappi Lahiri had the edge. Writer Rajendra Krishna — with his propensity to spin scripts, dialogues and lyrics at breakneck speed — even more so in remakes — became king down there.

Among the Southern filmmakers, L. V. Prasad had a keen sense of music, but such was the era of the '50s and '60s that the composers and lyricists almost always got complete freedom provided they came up with fabulous music. Among the foremost musicals from there were films like *Azaad*, *Amar Deep*, *Paigham*, *Chori Chori*, *Dil Ek Mandir*, *Suraj*, *Khandaan*, *Chitralekha*, *Sasural*, *Hamrahi*, *Milan*, *Jeene Ki Raah*, *Raja Aur Runk* and *Farz*.

In the more market-oriented '70s, the dedicated filmmakers and institutions began to lose out. In their place came more commercial men. The era of Laxmikant-Pyarelal, Kalyanji-Anandji and Rahul Dev Burman saw the composers doing their best



N IMPACT

work in Mumbai as they indulged the South with largely **chaalu** music. The few outstanding exceptions were LP's **Haathi Mere Saathi** and **Dulhan**, S.D.Burman's **Premnagar** and Rajesh Roshan's **Julie**. In 1979, the legendary K. Vishwanath stepped into Hindi films with that amazing musical, **Sargam**, followed by L.V. Prasad in resurgent form in the 1981 **Ek Duuje Ke Liye**.

In the South, men who dared to experiment with bold themes and techniques had made it, but these craftsmen had little sense of music and even less of a pulse on the national masses. Thus, Bharati Raja, Balu Mahendra, Bapu, S.V. Rajendra Singh and later even K. Vishwanath (as musically strong as ever in **Kaamchor**, **Jaag Utha Insaan**, **Sanjog**, **Sur-Sangam** and **Eeshwar**) lost to the Padmalaya coterie and to directors like K. Raghavendra Rao, Dasari Narayana Rao, T. Rama Rao, K. Bapaiah and others who had little feel, concern or sense for good music, but commanded box-office clout. In the '80s therefore, the discordant notes from the South, especially Bappi Lahiri's excesses under the Padmalaya banner, played a big role in moving audiences away from film music towards **ghazals** and **bhajans** and making film music reach its commercial — and many say, aesthetic — nadir.

During this period, the South, innovative even in the less desirable things, introduced the trend of lavish song-picturizations on sets and locations with giant and multiple drums, pots, balls, balloons, pillars and what-have-you. This appealed to the masses but appalled the classes, especially as Jeetendra (the pet of the South after the melodramatic Sunil Dutt-Rajendra Kumar phase), had just managed to outgrow the tight-n-

- ① – *Jaag Utha Insaan.*
- ② – *Raja Aur Rank.*
- ③ – *Haathi Mere Saathi.*
- ④ – *Dulhan.*
- ⑤ – *Kaamchor.*
- ⑥ – *Sanjog.*
- ⑦ – *Sur Sangam.*
- ⑧ – *Eeshwar.*
- ⑨ – *Roja.*
- ⑩ – *Bombay.*